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Virginia man pleads guilty in child pornography and attempted enticement case

WASHINGTON - A 24-year-old Virginia man, William McCouch, has pled guilty before the Honorable Reggie B. Walton in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to one count of Transportation of Child Pornography and one count of Attempted Enticement of a Minor in 2008, U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor announced today. McCouch, who entered his guilty plea on March 13, 2009, faces a minimum of five years and a maximum of twenty years in jail, and a \$250,000 fine when sentenced on June 12, 2009.

According to the government's evidence, on November 3, 2008, an individual later identified as the defendant, William McCouch, initiated contact with Metropolitan Police Department Detective Timothy Palchak who was acting in an undercover capacity as part of a multi-jurisdictional FBI Task Force. Detective Palchak identified himself as a 38-year-old male pedophile who was sexually active with his girlfriend's 9-year-old daughter. The defendant identified himself as a 23-year-old male who resided in Arlington, Virginia, and had a sexual interest in children 10 years old and up.

Detective Palchak had several Yahoo private message conversations with the defendant that started on November 3, 2008, and ended on December 15, 2008. During the first conversation on November 3, 2008, the defendant asked for a picture of the 9-year-old, and Detective Palchak forwarded to the defendant via Yahoo messenger three photographs of a clothed girl approximately nine years of age whom Detective Palchak claimed was his girlfriend's nine-year-old daughter. After viewing the photographs, the defendant asked if there was "any chance you'd let me touch her for real," asked for additional photographs, and claimed to have been "stroking" for the child while Detective Palchak was off line. On that same day, the defendant sent Detective Palchak, via computer, several images, to include three images of a prepubescent girl, estimated to be approximately eight years old, being sexually abused by an adult male.

The defendant and Detective Palchak engaged in additional conversations in November and December 2008, all of which were initiated by the defendant. During these conversations, the defendant stated that he would love to hear the girl's voice and repeatedly asked Detective Palchak "is she there," "do you have her tonight" and "will she be over," referring each time to the 9-year-old child. On December 4, 2008, the defendant

asked “may I come” when Detective Palchak said he would be picking up his girlfriend’s daughter and “what will you let me do to her?” When told that only oral sex would be allowed, the defendant said, “ok.” Additionally, on another occasion when Detective Palchak told the defendant that he would be having sex that evening with a twelve-year-old girl, the defendant asked for a picture and then asked “may I come as well?”

Finally, on December 15, 2008, the defendant asked Detective Palchak again “will she be over,” referring to the 9-year-old, and that he “might be interested in something” and “[t]hink I can come?” The defendant then asked what he could do with the child and when told again that he could only engage in oral sex, he stated, “[t]hat’s fine.” The defendant asked Detective Palchak if he was a police officer. He then asked where they could meet and chat for a few minutes and “just get right to it.” At 6:55 p.m., the defendant informed Detective Palchak that he would meet him in 20 minutes in front of a bar at 5th and H Street, NW, D.C. Shortly thereafter, the detective observed the defendant outside the bar matching the description and began talking with him. The defendant stated that he was the person that Detective Palchak had been chatting with on line. A pre-arranged signal was made to the arrest team and the defendant was placed under arrest after a brief chase and struggle.

A subsequent search of the defendant’s computers located at his home in Arlington, Virginia, revealed the images that the defendant had sent to Detective Palchak via computer. The defendant’s computers also contained five videos as well as 25 additional images. Both the videos and the images contained pornographic images including the vaginal and anal penetration of prepubescent girls.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood and the FBI/MPD Child Exploitation Task Force (formerly known as the Regional Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force FBI/MPD Child Exploitation Task Force). In February 2006, the Attorney General created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorney’s Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafchildhood.gov.

In announcing the guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Taylor praised the quick action and investigative work of a joint task force consisting of Metropolitan Police Department Detectives Timothy Palchak, Jonathan Andrews, Morani Hines, and Miguel Miranda; Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Scott Schelble; and other members of the Task Force. Finally, Mr. Taylor commended Criminal Investigator John Marsh, who provided forensic analysis; Phaylyn Hunt and Latoya Davenport, who provided paralegal support; and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jean Sexton, who is prosecuting this case.

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